

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 AF-06 IO-10 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04

SIL-01 NIC-01 EURE-00 /087 W
----- 021795

P R 141219Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1425

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 189

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: RLAB PINT PO

SUBJ: PROPOSED LABOR LAW THREATENS STABILITY OF GOVERNING
COALITION

REF: LISBON 137

SUMMARY: THE COMMUNIST PARTY, INTERSINDICAL, AND SMALLER
SATELLITE ORGANIZATIONS ARE ORGANIZING A LARGE DEMONSTRATION
OF WORKERS JANUARY 14 IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED LABOR LAW
CREATING A SINGLE LABOR CONFEDERATION. PROMULGATION OF THE
LAW COULD CAUSE THE PPD AND POSSIBLY THE SOCIALIST PARTY TO
WITHDRAW FROM THE GOVERNING COALITION. END SUMMARY

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1. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IS SCHEDULED TO DISCUSS ON

JANUARY 17 A DRAFT LAW PREPARED BY THE MINISTRY OF LABOR GOVERNING TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION. THE PROPOSED LAW, AS RECENTLY MODIFIED, REPORTEDLY CONTAINS PROVISIONS ESTABLISHING A SINGLE LABOR CONFEDERATIO WHICH ARE EVEN STRONGER THAN THOSE CONTAINED IN THE ORIGINAL DRAFT.

2. OUTCOME OF MINISTERIAL DEBATE ON LAW WILL BE AN IMPORTANT AINDICATION OF THE POLITICAL TREND IN PORTUGAL AS PPD LEADER MAGALHAES MOTA HAS THREATENED TO PULL THE PPD OUT OF THE GOVERNING COALITION SHOULD THE LAW PROVIDING FOR A SINGLE CONFEDERATION BE PROMULGATED. MINISTER OF JUSTICE SALGADO ZENHA (SOCIALIST PARTY) HAS CHALLENGED SECRETARY OF STATE FOR LABOR CARLOS CARVALHAS TO A TELEVISED DEBATE AND THE TWO HAVE EXCHANGED SEVERAL STRONGLY-WORDED LETTERS WHICH HAVE BEEN CARRIED PROMINENTLY BY ALL MAJOR NEWSPAPERS. SALGADO ZENHA DEFENDS LABOR UNITY WHICH IS FREELY ACHIEVED, BUT OPPOSES THE IMPOSITION OF A SINGLE LABOR CONFEDERATION BY LAW. CARVALHAS ON OTHER HAND ARGUES THAT WORKERS HAVE ALREADY SPOKEN ON THE ISSUE THROUGH A SERIES OF INTRA-UNION MEETINGS AND RESOLUTION FAVORING A SINGLE CONFEDERATION. MINISTER OF LABOR COSTA MARTINS ISSUED PUBLIC STATEMENT JANUARY 13 DECLARING THAT ISSUE IS SIMPLY WHETHER THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY WILL BE RESPECTED.

3. THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM) ANNOUNCED ON JANUARY 13 THAT THE PROPOSED LAW HAD BEEN THOROUGHLY DISCUSSED AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF THE AFM ON JANUARY 2. DECLARATION LAMENTS THE CREATION OF AN EMOTIONAL ATMOSPHERE OVER ISSUE AND URGES THAT DEMONSTRATION SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 14 BE CARRIED OUT IN ORDERLY MANNER.

4. ISSUE IS RAPIDLY BUILDING UP TO A SERIOUS CONFRONTATION BETWEEN OPPOSING FACTIONS WITHIN THE GOVERNING COALITION. INITIATIVE AT THIS TIME IS IN THE HANDS OF INTERSINDICAL AND THE COMMUNISTS WHO ARE GOING ALL OUT TO OBTAIN A LARGE TURNOUT AT THE JANUARY 14 RALLY. THE DECISION WHETHER TO ALLOW THE ISSUE TO COOL OR TO PRESS AHEAD FOR A RESOLUTION COME WHAT MAY, LIES WITH PRIME MINISTER VASCO GONCALVES WHO COULD POSTPONE CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED LAW AT CABINET MEETING
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JANUARY 17. ULTIMATE DECISION ON WHETHER LAW WILL BE APPROVED OR NOT RESTS WITH AFM OFFICERS WITHIN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, COALITION GOVERNMENT, LABOR LAW, PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LISBON00189
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750013-1184
From: LISBON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750154/aaaabvih.tel
Line Count: 110
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LISBON 137
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 APR 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <17 SEP 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROPOSED LABOR LAW THREATENS STABILITY OF GOVERNING COALITION
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PGOV, PO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006